

## How European is European identity? Extent and structure of continental identification in global comparison using SEM

Roose, Jochen

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# How European is European Identity?

Extent and Structure of Continental Identification in Global Comparison Using SEM

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Jochen Roose

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Kolleg-Forscherguppe

„The Transformative Power of Europe:

The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas“

lnhnestr. 26

14195 Berlin

Germany

Phone: +49 (0)30- 838 57033

Fax: +49 (0)30- 838 57096

[transform-europe@fu-berlin.de](mailto:transform-europe@fu-berlin.de)

[www.transformeurope.eu](http://www.transformeurope.eu)

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# HOW EUROPEAN IS EUROPEAN IDENTIFICATION?

## EXTENT AND STRUCTURE OF CONTINENTAL IDENTIFICATION IN GLOBAL COMPARISON USING SEM

Jochen Roose

Freie Universität Berlin

### Abstract

European identification has been previously explained by the selective gains brought by the European integration process, by personal transnational experiences and by the influence of political programs aiming at increasing levels of identification. All these explanations imply that identification with one's continent would be specific in extent and distribution across the social structure in comparison to other continents. These implicit assumptions of the discussion are tested with a global comparison using International Social Service Programme (ISSP) data and a longitudinal analysis using Eurobarometer data. The results show that, firstly, the current extent of continental identification in Europe is not higher than in other continents. Secondly, they reveal that there has been no increase in European identification in recent decades and thirdly, group comparing structural equation modeling (SEM) shows, that distribution of continental identification is similar on all continents. Accordingly, explaining European identification with respect to policy output of the EU is questioned by the findings. European identification proves to be independent of European political integration. Conclusions for transnational identity research and the European integration process are discussed.

### The Author



**Jochen Roose** is assistant professor for sociology of European societies at the Freie Universität Berlin. He has been working at the Science Center Berlin for Social Research, the University of Jena, and the University of Leipzig, before he came to the Freie Universität in 2004. His main research areas are sociology of European integration, cultural sociology, political sociology and methods of social research. Contact: [jochen.roose@fu-berlin.de](mailto:jochen.roose@fu-berlin.de)

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

European identification, understood as closeness felt to Europe, is, by its very name and essence, European.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, to ask for the Europeaness of European identification seems to make no sense. However, if we look at this topic from a different angle we are faced with an interesting research question: Is identification with one's continent in Europe, in extent and socio-structural composition, different to that within other continents? The European Union (EU) with its unique regional integration process uniting the European nation states into a partly supranational political system can be expected to exert considerable influence on affective bonds to the European continent. Therefore, we would expect a European particularity of continental identification in a global comparison.

Though it may seem obvious that the closeness felt to Europe is influenced by the EU and the European integration process and although this idea is widely shared by researchers of European integration, my aim is to question the Europeaness of European identification.

The assumption that European integration influences identification is significant for theory building and policy-making alike. In the context of public opinion on the European Union and the acceptance of European integration, the emotional side of identification is hotly debated (see e.g. Bruter 2006; Fuchs et al. 2009; Karolewski/Kaina 2006; Kohli 2000; McLaren 2007; Nissen 2006; Roose 2007). As identification with the political community is an integral part of support for a political system (Easton 1975; see also Fuchs 1999, 2002), it has gained importance in research. However, this research has focused solely on Europeans. Explanations have often been linked to the European Union and the achievements and effects of its activities aimed at identity formation from which some parts of the population profit more than others. What we are lacking by and large is a global comparison and analysis of identification with one's continent. Only a global comparison allows us to determine whether the patterns found in Europe are EU-specific or whether we find levels of identification and influence structures that are similar throughout the world, thus implying that European identity explanations referring to the particularity of the EU cannot be substantiated.

This article addresses these questions with an analysis of identification with one's continent in a global comparison. First, arguments are presented which suggest we should expect stronger continental identification in Europe and a specific pattern of socio-demographic influences on this identification among the population (2). After briefly introducing the data source (3), the first stage of the analysis describes the global distribution of identification with one's continent (4). The second step refers to the temporal development of European identification (5). Thereby, we can determine whether the current

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1 The paper has benefited from comments by an anonymous reviewer and participants of the conference "The Transformative Power of Europe", organized by the Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) "The Transformative Power of Europe", hosted at the Freie Universität Berlin. The KFG is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and brings together research on the diffusion of ideas in the EU's internal and external relations. For further information please consult [www.transformeurope.eu](http://www.transformeurope.eu).

2 European identification is a specific concept in the huge discussion on European identity (see below). It refers only to the personal feeling of attachment to a unit. Other strands in the debate on European identity refer to membership in the social unit Europe or particularities of Europe in comparison to other regions in the world (see Brubaker/Cooper 2000). Here, I focus solely on identification without reference to the other currents of the discussion.

level of identification, as indicated by the cross-sectional analysis, is the result of a “catch up” process or whether it reflects a stable situation. The last step of analysis compares the patterns of influence on continental identification in a global perspective. Hence, we can discover whether the arguments linking European identification to particular benefits and policy programs of the EU are plausible, or whether we find the same influences in other parts of the world that have no comparable political structure (6).

## 2. Why People Identify with Europe - in Theory

To explain the extent of European identification research literature frequently refers to the influence of the EU or to influences directly related to the EU. These arguments try to explain why it is highly plausible to expect a higher level of continental identification in Europe compared to other continents and why the socio-demographic characteristics of people in Europe identifying with their continent should be specific to Europe as well.

Three main lines of argument can be found in the literature. One approach is based on the idea that people who gain from the EU tend to identify with Europe. European identification is regarded as an effect of profiting from the EU and its policies. The second approach is linked to personal experiences while meeting other Europeans and positive interactions that result in stronger European identification. Finally, there is the idea of European identification increasing with the spread of collective narrations and symbols in a process similar to that of nation building.

Through analysis of data from the Eurobarometer survey, conducted by the European Commission (see 3), it has been shown time and again that people with higher education, better professional positions and higher income tend to show stronger attachment to Europe (Dubé/Magni Berton 2009; Duchesne/Frognier 1995; Fligstein 2008: 138ff). A usual interpretation of these findings is that these people have increased individual opportunities due to European integration. They have the chance to meet and interact with other Europeans as they profit most from the open borders and are able to widen their activities to the whole of the area:

*“the most privileged socioeconomic groups are the most European. Owners, managers, professionals, and other white collar workers are more likely to think of themselves as Europeans than are blue-collar workers or service workers. Educated people, regardless of occupation, are also more likely to see themselves as European, and young people are more likely to do so than older people, as are people with higher incomes. All these groups have opportunities to interact with people from other European countries”* (Fligstein 2008: 145; see also e.g. Immerfall/Sobisch 1997: 34).

The underlying mechanism can be twofold. The policies of the EU could result in specific advantages for these people, as they are able to profit from the opportunities of an open area for travelling and an open market. This would correspond to the utilitarian approach for attitudes on the EU (see e.g. Anderson/Kaltenthaler 1996; Eichenberg/Dalton 2007; Gabel 1998).<sup>3</sup> In a similar line of argument, but rather as an historical analogy to nation state formation, some authors contend that identification can be increased

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3 Mühler and Opp (Mühler/Opp 2006: 26) refer to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen/Fishbein 1980) and argue that identification should be stronger if people profit from the respective region.

by strengthening the social policy of the EU (see e.g. Meyer 2004, 2007). The output of EU policies is supposed to strengthen the identification of people profiting from it. Again, the basis of this second argument is the concept that identification is enhanced by advantages resulting from EU policies and the idea that we should expect stronger identification among those who profit most from the EU. As these gains are dependent on the EU and its policies, we should expect that the described mechanisms only work in the EU and on other continents we should find weaker identification with the continent, with this identification being unrelated to, or at least to a lesser extent related to, the respective social strata.

Another interpretation of these findings refers to the experiences of transnationally active people. According to this interpretation, it is the frequent and positive experiences of people in a transnational space that lead them to hold a European identity. This is argued for border regions (Pickel 1999; see also Roose 2010: 205ff; Schmidberger 1997; Schmidt et al. 2003) where people can regularly and easily interact because border barriers have been removed. It has also been argued for people who are mobile in the EU and meet people from other countries (Fligstein 2008; Mau 2007; Mau et al. 2008). The contact hypothesis of Allport (1954) and the discussion on cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990; Szerszynski/Urry 2002) are theoretical reference points. Again, because the measures of the EU to facilitate mobility within the Union are assumed to be influential we should expect higher levels of identification with one's continent in Europe only, while similar influences to this extent are by and large absent in other continents.<sup>4</sup>

This interpretation refers to a wide array of measures which were taken by EU institutions to create and promote a European identity. The European Commission finances several exchange programs for young people in various positions, such as students, pupils, or young people in professional training. The people-to-people projects in border regions or exchange programs for partner cities (INTERREG) are also targeted on furthering European identification by personal contact between Europeans.

A third approach focuses on European symbols and narrations (Cinnirella 1996: 270). From the processes of nation state formation and population integration, we have learned how important symbols and collective narrations are to identity formation (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1991; Hutchinson/Smith 1994; Smith 1991; Tilly 1975). As Gellner (1968: 168) asserts: "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist." This does not mean that the reference points of shared symbols, beliefs and historical events never existed, rather, it highlights that historical (and other) facts on their own do not create a community. They have to be interpreted and integrated into a narration, which of course neglects and forgets other facts, therefore resulting in the "invention of tradition", as Hobsbawm (1983) famously phrased it.

Some of the initiatives taken by the younger nation states have been copied by the EU. For example, the EU has its own anthem in Beethoven's setting of "Ode to Joy", though usually played without the text. The 9th of May is Europe Day, commemorating Robert Schuman's presentation of his plan in 1950

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4 Other regional systems like ASEAN or NAFTA do not facilitate cross border encounters to the extent that the EU does. Of course there are other border regions where a considerable share of people commutes and entertains regular contact. The US-Mexican border is a case in point, which has been subject to considerable research (Martinez 1998; Pries 1998; Pries 2007: 51ff). However, this takes place amidst much stricter regulations or illegally. Therefore, the effects should probably be less intense. Also, if the open borders of the EU did not make a difference at all for cross border encounters (which is unlikely), an explanation referring particularly to the EU would also be falsified, though in this unlikely case the cosmopolitanism argument would still hold.



to form a European Community of Coal and Steel which was established soon after. In many European cities there are events and celebrations on this occasion. The European flag is the most widely known EU symbol (although it was originally the symbol of the Council of Europe).<sup>5</sup> The EU motto “unity in diversity” belongs also to this category of collective symbols and narrations. However, writing a European history – in a similar vein to how nation states have done and still do – has proved to be quite difficult. A House of European History is planned and a building has been bought in Brussels to house this exhibition. But the steps towards such a collective European history seem to be slow and the most influential medium for disseminating a European interpretation of history – curricula in schools – is everywhere dominated by national interpretations (Kotte 2007; Langner 2009; Seidendorf 2006). In the UNESCO database “Memory of the World”, which is a collection of “valuable archive holdings and library collections worldwide”,<sup>6</sup> we find several entries which would be suitable for a European collaboration, such as collections of European styles in architecture or the original transcript of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (which includes Europe’s anthem “Ode to Joy”). The use of these holdings as part of a collection on European cultural heritage would be possible, or in the latter case even imperative, but in the annotations to these entries references to Europe as a whole are by and large missing (Zingerle 2006).

We have found several arguments to expect European identification to be particularly European in extent and in relation to certain social strata. As there are benefits and new opportunities resulting from membership of the EU, as well as politically-initiated programs by the EU aimed at enhancing European identification, we should expect a higher level of continental identification among the population of EU member states compared to non-member states in Europe, as well as compared to other countries in the world and the respective continental identification found there. Additionally, we should expect individuals from specific social strata to identify more intensively with Europe, as it is the highly educated with better professional positions, who – according to common arguments – profit more from the internal market policy of the EU. The less educated with the lower professional status are more dependent on the nationally-dominated welfare state and are likely to fear a threat to their weaker position on the labor market. These mechanisms are again bound to EU policy of market integration which does not take place to a similar extent in other continents.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, we should expect the composition of people identifying with Europe to be specific to EU member states and not to be found, or at least found to a lesser extent, in non-EU (or non-EFTA) states and in other continents.

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5 The EU flag is known by 92 per cent of Europeans and 91 per cent are able to say that it is the symbol of the EU (Eurobarometer 65). 33 per cent of Europeans knew that the EU has an anthem although they were not asked what it is (Eurobarometer 64). More, i.e. 41 per cent of the Europeans, knew that there is a Europe Day, but again they were not tested on the actual date (Eurobarometer 62).

6 Self-description on the Website of UNESCO’s project “Memory of the World”.

7 The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) integrates some European states de facto into the internal market without them being members of the EU. This applies for Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

### 3. Data

Research on European identification has concentrated on the Eurobarometer studies as a data source. The Eurobarometer (EB) is a survey regularly carried out by the European Commission in all member states (and for some time spans also in prospective member states). In each country roughly 1,000 interviews are carried out (with more in the United Kingdom and Germany and fewer in Luxembourg and Malta). The surveys began in 1970 and since 1976 they were conducted at least biannually. Besides regularly changing topics a number of questions have been repeatedly asked over time including the issue of European identification. As the wording of the questions has changed over time, a continuous trend is not perfectly available. However, some very insightful comparisons over time are possible. The obvious shortcoming of the EB for our research question is its restriction to EU member states and prospective member states.<sup>8</sup>

Another data source includes a question on identification with one's continent: the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). The ISSP conducts surveys in many countries in the world. The study in 2003, with a focus on national identity, brings together respondents from 29 countries.<sup>9</sup> The question most relevant to our research was: "How close do you feel to [continent]?" with the response options of "very close", "close", "not very close", "not at all close".<sup>10</sup>

Beyond this dependent variable, a number of independent variables about the respondents' socio-demographic situation are used. Gender and age are measured straight forwardly. Professional status is operationalized by income and professional prestige. Income is measured as the log of income z-standardized for each country, thereby reflecting the respective income structure of each country. Professional prestige is measured by the prestige values according to Treiman (Ganzeboom/Treiman 1996), using the International Standard Classification of Occupations' (ISCO-88) coding of occupations. Education has been measured as the years of full time schooling including university but not vocational training.<sup>11</sup>

### 4. Continental Identification around the World

The first question appears to be straightforward to answer. To determine whether the extent of identification with one's continent is higher among EU countries than outside the EU, we must look at the frequencies of respondents who felt "very close", "close", "not very close" and "not close at all" to their continent. Table 1 presents the answers to this question per country and groups the countries according to continent and EU membership.

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8 Though the data set is not suitable for the analysis here, it will later be used for analyzing the evolution of European identification (see 5).

9 For details on the study see: <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/issp/modules-study-overview/national-identity/2003/>; last access 3 November 2010.

10 The values for the codes are 1 "not close at all" to 4 "very close", i.e. higher values stand for higher identification.

11 For convenience, occupational prestige, age, and years of education have been divided by 100.

Table 1: Feeling close to continent (ISSP, in %)

Country	Continent	very close	close	not very close	not close at all	N
Austria	Europe	29,5	41,5	25,4	3,6	992
Denmark	Europe	18,2	35,8	34,9	11,2	1255
Finland	Europe	7,4	32,2	47,1	13,2	1211
France	Europe	20,4	34,0	29,1	16,5	1522
Germany (east)	Europe	10,2	46,9	36,9	6,0	401
Germany (west)	Europe	13,3	47,9	33,1	5,6	803
Great Britain	Europe	4,5	22,7	41,2	31,6	813
Ireland	Europe	10,8	33,7	38,6	16,9	1046
Portugal	Europe	26,0	41,9	25,7	6,4	1542
Spain	Europe	17,3	60,6	17,2	4,9	1192
Sweden	Europe	14,2	34,5	41,8	9,4	1103
<b>EU-15*</b>		<b>15,6</b>	<b>39,2</b>	<b>33,7</b>	<b>11,4</b>	
Czech Republic	Europe	20,3	51,4	22,0	6,2	1204
Hungary	Europe	63,6	30,2	5,2	1,1	1007
Latvia	Europe	3,4	16,2	41,6	38,8	925
Poland	Europe	19,5	43,5	32,3	4,7	1199
Slovak Republic	Europe	17,8	51,7	21,2	9,3	1047
Slovenia	Europe	21,2	45,5	23,6	9,7	1057
<b>EU-NMS-10 (2004)*</b>		<b>24,3</b>	<b>39,8</b>	<b>24,3</b>	<b>11,6</b>	
Bulgaria	Europe	32,4	40,1	17,7	9,8	950
<b>EU-NMS-2 (2007)</b>		<b>32,4</b>	<b>40,1</b>	<b>17,7</b>	<b>9,8</b>	
Norway	Europe	19,7	40,2	33,0	7,1	1322
Switzerland	Europe	20,7	58,3	18,9	2,1	1031
<b>EFTA (not EU)*</b>		<b>20,3</b>	<b>49,3</b>	<b>26,5</b>	<b>4,6</b>	
Russia (European part)	Europe	2,9	8,3	30,8	58,1	2039
<b>Europe (not EFTA)</b>		<b>2,9</b>	<b>8,3</b>	<b>30,8</b>	<b>58,1</b>	
Canada	North America	19,2	44,0	27,2	9,6	1031
United States	North America	27,1	38,4	27,5	7,0	1165
<b>North America*</b>		<b>23,1</b>	<b>41,2</b>	<b>27,4</b>	<b>8,3</b>	
Chile	South America	36,0	36,5	21,6	6,0	1467
Uruguay	South America	22,3	32,2	34,5	11,0	1089
Venezuela	South America	30,0	28,3	23,5	18,2	1162
<b>South America*</b>		<b>29,4</b>	<b>32,3</b>	<b>26,5</b>	<b>11,7</b>	
Japan	Asia	16,1	46,5	28,2	9,2	901
South Korea	Asia	6,0	24,4	45,6	24,0	1286
Taiwan	Asia	1,3	10,1	34,5	54,2	1827
<b>Asia*</b>		<b>7,8</b>	<b>27,0</b>	<b>36,1</b>	<b>29,1</b>	
South Africa	Africa	38,7	31,4	19,2	10,7	2357
<b>Africa</b>		<b>38,7</b>	<b>31,4</b>	<b>19,2</b>	<b>10,7</b>	

\*All averages are unweighted means.

The level of identification with Europe varies considerably amongst the old member states of the EU. Austria is at the top of the range with 30 per cent who feel “very close” to Europe and Great Britain is at the opposite end with only 5 per cent feeling “very close” to Europe. Taking the first two categories together (“very close” and “close”), Portugal scores even higher than Austria, while Britain remains with the smallest per cent. The mean of the countries belonging to the group of old EU-15 member states for feeling “very close” is 16 percent and for feeling “very close” or “close” 55 per cent.

Six countries belong to the Eastern accession group of 2004. At the time when the survey was carried out they were not yet members of the EU but the accession date was already fixed and prior to accession considerable financial transfers took place. The results for these countries cover an even wider range from 64 percent (Hungary) to 3 per cent (Latvia) feeling “very close” to Europe. The average of these countries for feeling “very close” is a considerable 24 per cent, which is even higher than the subjective identification amongst respondents from the old member states. As the people in the new member states begin to profit from EU transfers, such a result seems plausible, although the differences between the countries remain difficult to explain.<sup>12</sup>

In the two EFTA countries which are not members of the EU (but are part of the ISSP data-set) the average level of closeness felt to Europe is not lower than the level amongst the EU-15 countries. Every fifth person in these countries feels “very close” to Europe and another half of the population feels “close” to Europe. One might conclude from this comparison that the economic advantages, which are similar for EU members and EFTA members, are more influential than the identity building activities of the EU targeted only at EU member states. However, this interpretation seems to be too ambitious in light of the high variance amongst EU member states.

Feeling “close” to Europe is considerably less frequent in Russia, the only available European country which is neither part of EFTA nor the EU. Only 3 per cent feel “very close” to Europe and only another 8 percent feel “close” to Europe. From this result we could conclude that economic advantages provided by the European free market (including by and large the EFTA countries) and the identity building activities of the EU have an effect. The Russians and their low identification with Europe are the crucial case in point. However, Russia is only one case having to carry all the load of evidence. As soon as we leave Europe and turn to the rest of the world, the picture changes completely.

The second highest level of continental identification is found in South Africa, where 39 per cent feel “very close” to Africa and another 31 per cent feel “close” to Africa. Also in South America identification with the continent is very high. In Chile, 36 per cent feel “very close” to South America and another 37 per cent feel “close” to their continent. The numbers for Venezuela are a bit lower (“very close”: 30 per cent, “close”: 28 per cent), but the share of people feeling “very close” in Venezuela is still higher than in any EU-15 member state. In the EU, only Hungary, with its exceptionally high rate of 64 per cent of respondents feeling “very close” to Europe,<sup>13</sup> shows stronger identification with its respective continent.

12 Díez Medrano (2003) shows in his in-depth study of attitudes on the EU and European identification how country-specific the influences are and accordingly how difficult general explanations are to find.

13 A similar question has been asked around the same time in the EB. People were asked how attached they feel to the European Union (not Europe!) with the options being “very attached”, “fairly attached”, “not very attached” and “not at all attached”. In Hungary, the share of those who feel “very attached” to the European Union is by

It is also instructive to take a look at those countries where closeness to the continent is seldom felt. At the very bottom of the scale we find the Taiwanese and the Russians. In both countries more than half of the population feels “not at all close” to its respective continent. Other countries in which more than one fifth of respondents do “not feel at all close” to his or her continent are Israel (among the Jewish as well as the Arabs) and South Korea, but also some countries of the EU. 32 per cent of the British do “not at all feel close” to Europe and even 39 per cent of Latvians say that they do “not at all feel close” to Europe.

Taking these findings together we can see that it is no longer valid to assume that Europeans and especially the people within the EU identify more strongly with Europe than people elsewhere do with their respective continent.

Before we discard any influence from the EU in terms of individual gains, easy opportunities for international encounters or identity formation activities, we shall discuss a second test of this hypothesis to see change over time.

## 5. European Identification over Time

There is a possible way to explain why the EU might have an (increasing) effect on identification with Europe and yet we still might not see the expected differences in a global comparison. We could assume that the EU already has increased European identification amongst those people living in Europe and that their level of identification as found in the 2003 survey is already the result of this process. This would be plausible if the continental identification in Europe was extremely low in a global comparison in earlier decades. In fact, such an assumption might be reasonable when we take into account the bloody wars in Europe in the first half of the 20th century and even in the centuries before. Obviously Europe was not the only continent involved in bitter wars with huge death tolls. Still, the world wars can be regarded as exceptional in their brutality and involvement of civilian populations so that a negative effect on continental identification is at the very least a possibility.

We do not have data on continental identification for the years when the forerunner of the EU, the European Coal and Steel Community, was founded in the early 1950s. However, one should keep in mind that neither the economic advantages of a free market nor the activities of the EU in furthering European identification had become significant for the ordinary population at that time. The single market project gained momentum with the *Cassis de Dijon* ruling by the European Court of Justice in 1979 and the intensified activity of the European Commission following the White Paper on the internal market in 1985 (see e.g. Peterson/Bomberg 1999: 60ff). Exchange programs such as ERASMUS or INTERREG were initiated in the 1990s. The European anthem, the Europe Day and the European flag were chosen in 1985 and 1986 respectively, with the Motto only following in the year 2000. Likewise, other activities which could be regarded as part of this identity formation by EU institutions mostly began in the 1990s and thereafter. So the relevant time span in which the EU’s activities should have the most influence on identification –

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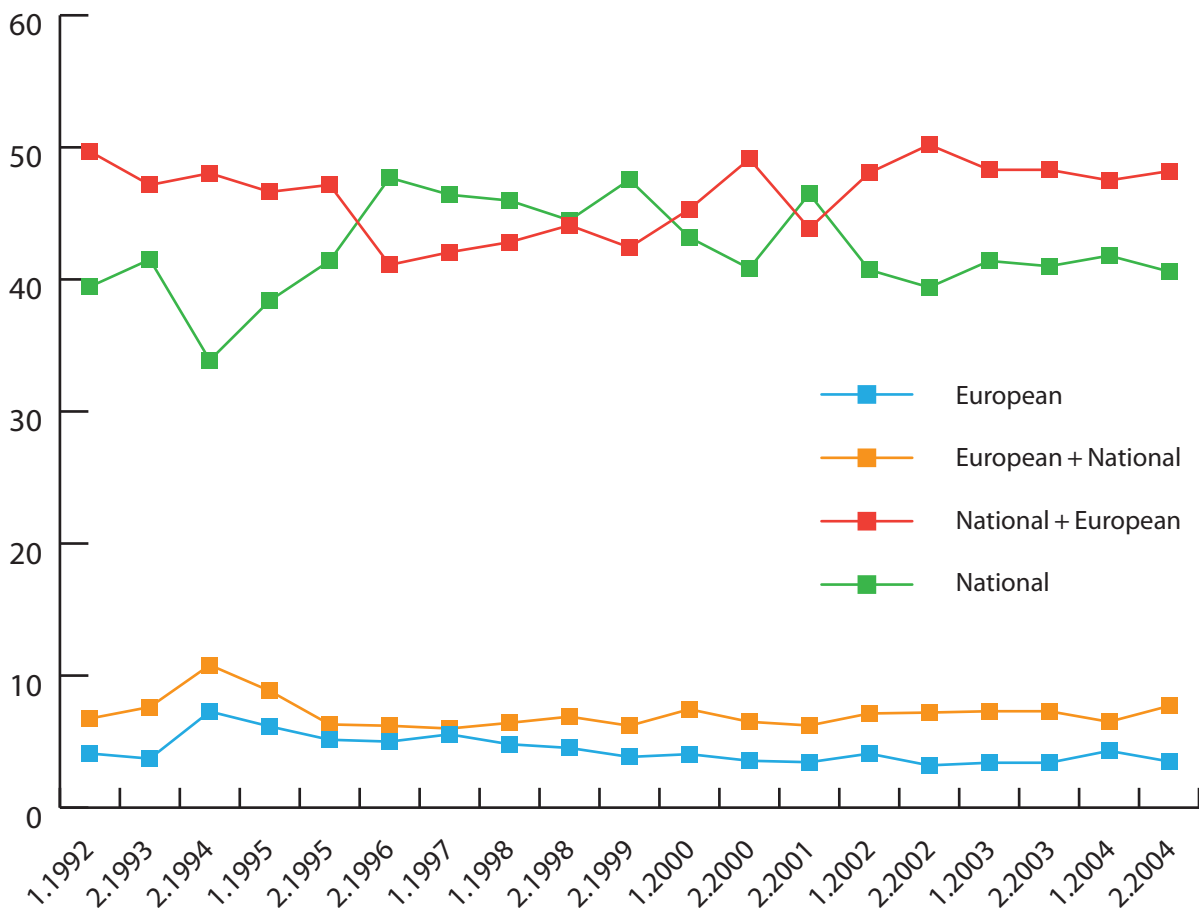
far the largest (53.6 per cent). Ranking second is Bulgaria with 28.5 per cent. Though this question is not exactly the same as in the ISSP, in which not the EU but Europe is the reference object, the answer patterns are similar enough to validate the reported exceptional finding for Hungary.

according to theories – is in the 1980s at the earliest, but mainly we should focus on the following two decades.

From the Eurobarometer we have data on the evolution of European identification. Different versions of asking about something like a European identification have been used, but the results concerning the time trend are very constant.

In the 1990s a question dominated which asked the respondent to weigh his/her belonging to the respective nation state against his/her belonging to Europe.<sup>14</sup> Figure 1 shows the development over time of answers to this question.

Figure 1: Self Concept: European vs. National 1992 to 2004



14 The wording is: "In the near future, will you see yourself as..." with the options "Nationality only", "Nationality and European", "European and Nationality", "European only". There has been much criticism concerning this question, but one should keep in mind that a considerable change in the extent of identification with Europe should also have some influence on the response patterns for this question.

In the years 1992 to 2004 there is no obvious trend indicating an increase in European identification. Around 40 per cent of the EU population, increasing slightly between 1996 and 2000, regard themselves as only their nationality. Most of the others see themselves as belonging to their Nationality in the first place and Europe thereafter, while only few regard themselves as European and National, or European only. An obvious rise in European identification, indicating influence by the individual gains available from the internal market or by the other attempts to increase European identification, cannot be found.

The result remains identical when we look at another version of the question. In some studies of the EB respondents were asked how often they feel not only national but also European, with the options “often”, “seldom” or “never”. Changes in response between 1982 and 2005 for the ten states which were already members in 1982 are moderate and again with no clear trend. In 1982, 17 per cent of the respondents said that they often feel European; in 1992 this share fell to 13 per cent. By 2005 the number rose back up to 19 percent. In the other categories (“seldom” and “never”) the changes are just as small. This question, then, like the other, but covering a longer time span, does not indicate a considerable rise of European identification since the early 1980s. Rather, European identification, as far as it can be measured from these questions, has remained by and large constant.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, we can rule out the possibility that the current extent of European identification is the result of a considerable increase after a very low initial level. Instead, we can conclude that the extent of European identification in the EU is not peculiar to Europe but within the usual range of continental identification found around the world.

## 6. Socio-Structural Differences in Continental Identification

Besides differences between the extents of individual identification, we also should expect specific variation in continental identification according to socio-demographic characteristics. As argued above (2), within the EU the highly educated with higher professional status and income should identify with Europe to a larger extent than respondents from lower social strata, as the former profit most from the integration process, whilst the latter are more likely to be threatened by increased competition in their respective labor market segment. These influences should be irrelevant outside the EU.

We again turn to the abovementioned ISSP data-set of 2003 but now compare the influence of socio-demographic variables on the strength of continental identification. Path models provide a powerful tool for the comparison of groups and the analysis of causal structures for different samples.<sup>16</sup>

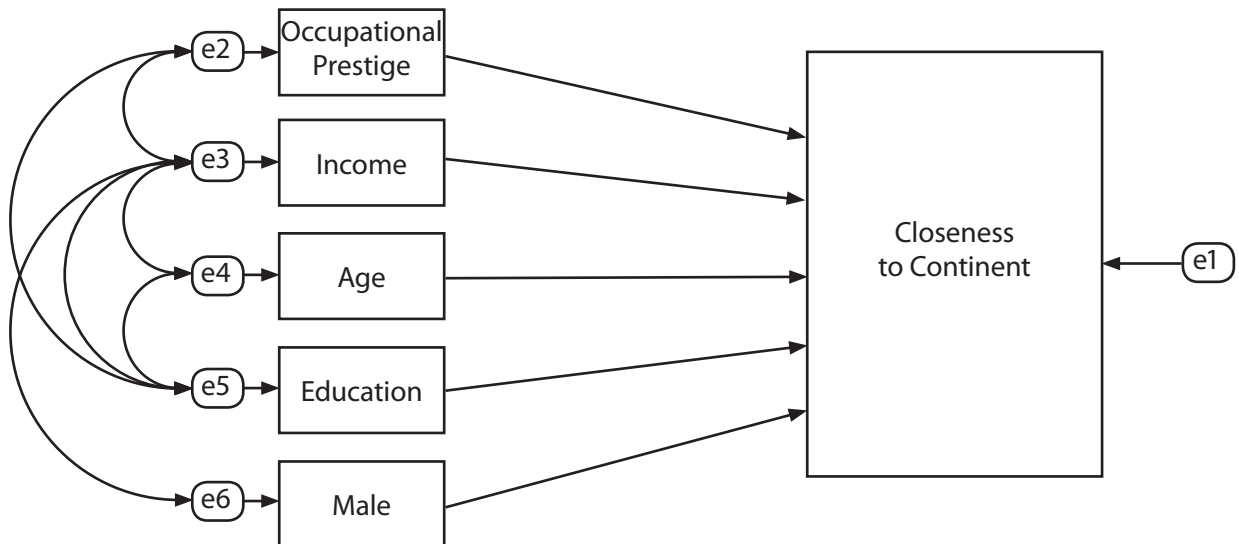
Figure 2 presents a fairly simple path model. The influence of occupational prestige, income, age, education and gender on an individual's identification with their respective continent is modeled. Some of the variables can be expected to be highly correlated. Occupation prestige, education and income are

15 See also the analysis by Duchesne and Frogner (Duchesne/Frogner 1995) on this matter, as well as Fligstein (2008: 141f).

16 Due to unclear identification of the respective continent or due to missing data, the following countries had to be excluded from the analysis: Venezuela, Taiwan, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Israel, Australia and the Philippines. Germany is analyzed separately for East and West.

obviously closely connected. Additionally, age can be expected to have an influence on income and, due to the expansion of education, also on the educational level.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 2: Path Analysis for the Closeness Felt to One's Continent: Theoretical Model



What should we expect from the group comparison when we assume a specific influence of socio-demographic variables on continental identification in the EU and a different pattern outside the EU? First, we should expect that we are unable to fit a model with fixed path coefficients for all groups.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, we should expect that a model fitted to the EU member states would not fit for the other countries.

Interestingly though, it is possible to fit a model for all countries with fixed path coefficients (see figure 3). The model fit is satisfying, which is a surprising result considering that we have a very heterogeneous sample of countries being analyzed.<sup>19</sup>

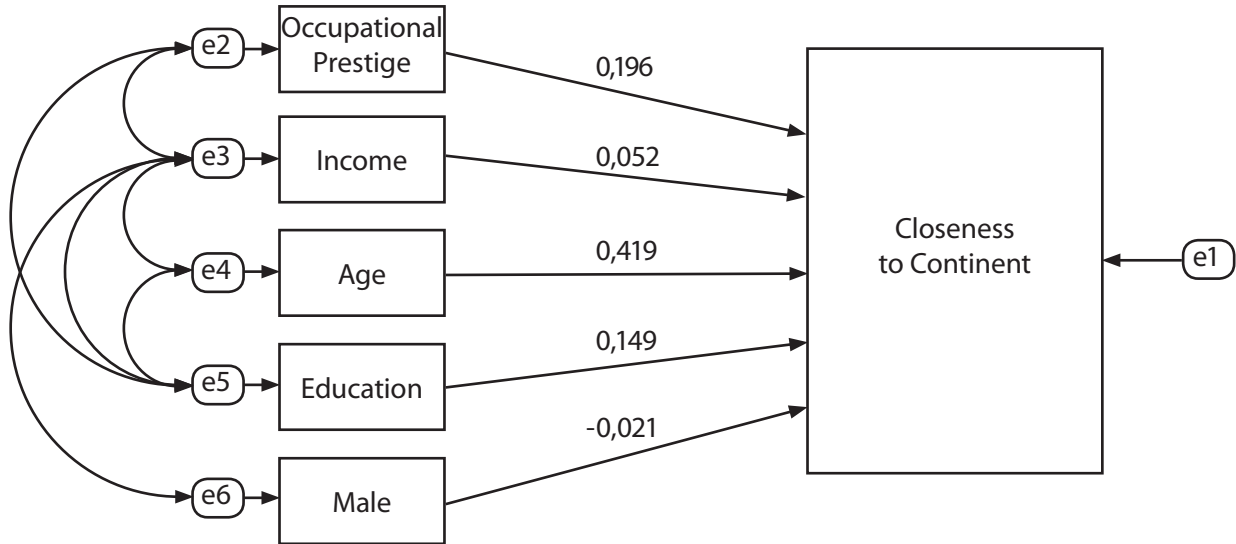
17 These correlations can be found in the double arrows connecting the error terms of the respective variables. The straight arrows describe the causal influence modeled according to theoretical reasoning.

18 For those unfamiliar with path analysis, this means that the coefficients of causal influence (equal to regression coefficients in regression analysis) are equal for all groups, i.e. country samples.

19 The global fit measures are: RMR=0.021, GFI =0.982 (usual threshold is >0.95), AGFI=0.960 (>0.90), CFI=0.942 (>0.90), NFI=0.932 (>0.90), RMSEA=0.013 (<0.10). For recommended thresholds of model fit see e.g. Schmidt/Davidov (2006: 41) and Hu/Bentler (1995: 95).



Figure 3: : Path Analysis for Closeness Felt to One's Continent: all countries with fixed effects



The coefficients in the model confirm that people with better professional positions, higher income and better education tend to identify more with their continent. Additionally, older people tend to identify more with their continent.<sup>20</sup> According to the coefficients men tend to identify less with their continent. However, this finding is not significant at the 0.1 % level. As the number of valid observations for the model amounts to roughly N=25,000, we should have doubts about the validity of a coefficient which is not significant at this level. Therefore, it is quite likely that there is no difference influenced by a person's gender. These findings are by no means new in research on European identification (see e.g. Duchesne/Frogner 1995; Fligstein 2008; Kohli 2002). What is remarkable though is that the influences are identical in all the countries around the world.

To verify this finding, we can make an additional test. The sample of available countries we have used is dominated by EFTA members. In the overall sample analyzed in this path model, there are only 8 non-EFTA countries and 19 EFTA member countries (with 20 samples, as Germany is analyzed separately for East and West). To verify our results with a stricter test we can determine whether the coefficients in the model are also valid for the non-EFTA countries when analyzed on their own.

<sup>20</sup> All these coefficients are significant on the 0.1 % level (not reported in figure 3).

*Table 1: Feeling close to continent (ISSP, in %)*

	Model for EU-27 countries	Model for EU-15 countries	Model for non-EFTA countries
RMR	0.024	0.023	0.061
GFI	0.982	0.985	0.974
AGFI	0.963	0.968	0.946
CFI	0.942	0.950	0.919
NFI	0.929	0.938	0.909
RMSEA	0.016	0.019	0.030

Coefficients are fixed to the values of the reference model for all country samples; RMR - Root Mean Square Residual; GFI - Goodness of Fit Index (usual threshold >0.95); AGFI - Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (>0.90); CFI - Comparative Fit Index (>0.90); NFI - Normed Fit Index (>0.90); RMSEA - Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (<0.10).

Table 2 compares the Goodness of Fit measures for path models between the countries belonging to the older EU-15 member states, the countries belonging to the EU-27 member states and the available non-EFTA countries, where the coefficients were fixed to the respective value calculated for the whole sample above. The Goodness of Fit measures for the EU-27 countries indicate an acceptable quality of the model which is similar to the overall model. This is no surprise because these countries make up the largest share in the sample analyzed. The model fit for the countries from the older EU members (EU-15) is about as good as the fit for the current EU members (EU-27). However, the Goodness of Fit measures for the model calculated for the non-EFTA countries are very good as well and are even slightly better than the Goodness of Fit measures for the EU-27 and the EU-15 countries. So the results for the theoretical model (see Figure 2) in the six non-EFTA countries (which are Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Uruguay and the USA) are very similar to the results for older and newer EU member states.

The path analysis has shown quite clearly that the influence of the socio-demographic variables – prestige of occupation, income, age, education and gender – in EU countries is almost identical to that found in the non-EU countries. This even holds true if we allow some time for the attempts by the EU to form a European identity to take effect, as the comparison with the older EU-15 member states shows.

## 7. Conclusion

The EU is unique within the world. In no other continent do we find such an endeavor of uniting established nation states in a new political system. This political and economic process should be accompanied by a change in attitudes and self-identity of European citizens. This assumption applies not only as a theoretical expectation but as a normative statement according to the paradigm of political culture.

There has been ample research on European identity and its development within the EU. However, a comparison between the continental identification of Europeans and people in other parts of the world with their respective continents had not been previously carried out. This article has shown that research focused solely on Europe can be quite misleading.

In theory, it is very plausible that the level and structure of European identification is specific to Europe and the EU. The EU institutions have taken several measures aiming at identity formation by publicly appraising cultural similarities and collective cultural European roots, as well as establishing common European symbols. Specific gains from increased EU integration for the population as a whole, and even more so for the highly educated with better jobs, are also supposed to be influential for identity formation. Consideration of these descriptions and assumptions would lead us to expect the EU population to identify more strongly with Europe than citizens elsewhere do with their respective continent.

This assumption has turned out to be wrong. The data available has shown that the level of continental identification is similar on all continents. The differences between countries are sometimes very great and much larger than the differences between continents. On average, we do not find a higher level of continental identification in Europe compared to other continents and the countries with the highest proportions of people identifying strongly with their continent, besides Hungary, are South Africa, Chile and Venezuela, i.e. outside of the EU.

In addition, there are no specific patterns of socio-economic influences on continental identification in Europe compared to other continents. All around the world people with higher income, higher age, higher occupational prestige and – with less influence – higher education, tend to feel closer to their respective continent. A special situation in Europe cannot be found.

The results presented here offer a considerable challenge to the usual explanations for identification with Europe. The approach of explaining attitudes towards Europe, including identification, by benefits resulting from the European integration process is at odds with the results found here. If selective gains are influential we should expect a higher level of identification with one's continent in Europe and we should find different patterns of influences on identification (and accordingly different path analysis models) for EU countries compared to others. This is not the case. Possibly, it is rather a general cosmopolitan perspective, learned among higher social strata, which widens the view to the continent as a whole (cf. Beck/Grande 2004; Hannerz 1990; Held 2002; Mau 2006; Szerszynski/Urry 2002). The idea of cognitive mobilization, presented decades ago by Inglehart (1970) and Deutsch (1961), is more in accordance with our findings.

There are some lessons to be learned. Firstly, attempts to explain identification with Europe should refrain from referring to particular gains and losses arising from the unification process. According to the presented results, identification with the European continent is not dependent on membership of the EU but in fact it underlies mechanisms which are of general impact all around the world.

Secondly, a general puzzle of attitude research with respect to the EU is solved. As identification with Europe is not related to membership of the EU, European identification should be regarded as an independent variable explaining other kinds of attitudes towards the EU. It is not the evaluation of the EU which results in a European identification but it is the identification which has an influence over the evaluation.

Thirdly, for the European integration process and elite strategies to support this process, these findings bare fundamental consequences. European identification, with its influence on support for EU integration

and EU policies (see e.g. Fuchs et al. 2009; Roose 2007), seems to be unresponsive to selective gains. The effort to bind citizens emotionally to Europe by successful policy output seems to be futile. Ever more eager projects of providing citizens with even more supposed benefits from the EU, such as a common European welfare state, will probably not build up the collective identification needed but will instead fail because of too little European identification. In addition, the activities to enhance identification by introducing common symbols of unity and a common historical narration have been without considerable effect so far. The path of community building, which the nation states went down so successfully, seems to have not really begun in the EU. Accordingly, the EU should not count too much on increasing identification above the current level through emotionally founded support.

Finally, researchers of European identity and, indeed, other European issues, should not forget to widen their view beyond the EU. Some trends which seem specific to the EU experience may turn out to be part of global phenomena unrelated to the unique European integration process.

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